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NEO-CONS STILL CONTROL PRESIDENT

ELLIOT ABRAMS
Neo-con powerbroker.

CHUCK HAGEL
Worried about Neo-cons.

Wolfowitz, Perle, Feith May Be Gone, But Neo-cons Still Running U.S. Policy

Some of the leading architects of the Iraq War, such as Douglas Feith, Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle, have been removed from positions of power, but don't think the neo-cons have totally given up. This week, correspondent Michael Collins Piper details the little-known facts regarding a key behind-the-scenes operator who still dictates U.S. policy in the Middle East.

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Senator Chuck Hagel (R-Neb., center) speaks during a press conference as Rep. Joe Sestak (D-Pa., right) and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker (left) look on at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad in mid-April. Hagel said that American meddling in Iraq was "not open ended" and defended supporting a vote for tying new funds for the country with a timeline to withdraw troops. Hagel is no liberal by any stretch but he has emerged as a leading critic of the Bush administration, and he's now under attack by Bush loyalists.

SABAH ARAR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Neo-Cons Still Control U.S. Policy

War hero-turned-Senator confronts America's pro-Israel hardliners

By Michael Collins Piper

SEN. CHUCK HAGEL (R-Neb.) has charged that hard-line pro-Israel neo-conservatives are still directing the Bush administration's U.S. Middle East policy, and this to the detriment of America's interests. This is a pointed contradiction of continuing claims by many in the Israel-friendly American media monopoly who attempt to promote the myth that the neo-conservatives are no longer of any influence inside the Bush administration.

Because the neo-conservatives have been so discredited by their involvement in foisting the Iraq debacle on the American people, the media has sought to suggest that the influence of the neo-conservatives has been on the wane. But in the judgment of those in the know— including Hagel—nothing could be further from the truth.

Hagel—one of a handful of Republicans in Congress who have challenged the Bush administration's disastrous policy in Iraq as well as the president's refusal to engage in constructive dialogue with Syria and Iran— recently told columnist Robert Novak that he believes that the prime mover behind the ongoing Middle East policy of the administration is Elliot Abrams, who serves as deputy national security advisor.

In addition, Hagel told Novak, there are many "foreign ministers, ambassadors and former U.S. officials," who believe, as Hagel believes, that Abrams "is making policy in the Middle East."

What's more, Hagel said, there are even Israeli officials who have said that while they would like to deal with Syria in a bid for Middle East peace, that it is Abrams who, in Hagel's words, "keeps pushing them back."

Although little known to the general public, Abrams is a very powerful player in pro-Israel power networks reaching from Washington to Tel Aviv, and has been for quite a while.

Prior to his appointment as the Bush administration's deputy national security advisor in charge of the grandly titled concept of "global democracy strategy," Abrams was senior director of the National Security Council's desk for Near East and North African Affairs where—not surprisingly—he exercised his considerable clout on behalf of Israel's interests.

Perhaps best known for having been convicted for his part as a State Department official enmeshed in the now-infamous Iran-contra scandal during the Reagan administration—a scandal that more appropriately should have been called the Iran-Israel-contra affair, considering Israel's central, though largely hushed-up role in the matter—Abrams was later pardoned by former President George H. W. Bush.

Abrams is also said to have played a major part in instigating a coup attempt in 2002 against Venezuela's democratically elected president, Hugo Chavez, who has been widely condemned by pro-Israel elements for his friendly relationships with the late Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, both targets of Israel's ire.

However, Abrams's personal and political connections are most illustrative of where the primary interests of the so-called "democracy czar" really lie.

Abrams is the son-in-law of Norman Podhoretz, the self-styled "ex-Trotskyite" communist who is one of the founding fathers of the neo-conservative network. Podhoretz served for many years as editor of *Commentary*, the magazine voice of the American Jewish Committee in New York.

Abrams is considered somewhat controversial for having expressed harsh opposition to intermarriage between Christians and Jews, a position echoing not only the policies laid forth by the German Third Reich but which also reflects the thinking of many American Jewish organizations.

Perhaps Abrams's most auspicious association was his affiliation with the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), a pressure group founded by William Kristol, editor of the neo-conservative *Weekly Standard*, published by billionaire Rupert Murdoch, chief of the Fox News propaganda empire. PNAC proclaimed, just prior to the 9-11 terrorist attacks, that a "new Pearl Harbor" was necessary in order to inflame Americans into supporting U.S. intervention around the globe.

While Abrams appears to be held very much in esteem in Republican circles—despite his past—his critic, Chuck Hagel, is not. The Nebraska senator has been widely condemned in "conservative" publications for taking on the president. Columnist David Limbaugh—brother of radio heavyweight Rush Limbaugh—recently spat that Hagel was now a RINO—that is, a "Republican in name only" because of Hagel's views on the Iraq travesty.

The winner of two Purple Hearts who saw heavy combat as a U.S. soldier in Vietnam—where he saved his own brother's life and that of several others, even while his own face was on fire—Hagel is hardly a "RINO" as Limbaugh suggests. In fact, Hagel's voting record is conservative in the classic sense, and he has earned a lifetime conservative rating of 85.2% from the American Conservative Union.

Although talked of in the media as a possible presidential candidate Hagel has yet to make his intentions known. While some years ago Hagel attended a meeting of the secretive Bilderberg group, he has not been invited back.

A journalist specializing in media critique, **Michael Collins Piper** is the author of ***Final Judgment***, the controversial "underground bestseller" documenting the collaboration of Israeli intelligence in the assassination of John F. Kennedy. He is also the author of ***The High Priests of War***, ***The New Jerusalem***, ***The Judas Goats***, and ***Dirty Secrets***, all available from America First Books and First Amendment Books: 1-888-699-NEWS. He has lectured on suppressed topics in places as diverse as Malaysia, Japan, Canada, Russia and Abu Dhabi.

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